

Miss Balfour (Michigan): We have a society library supported by the society, more like a private institution than like a university or public institution paid for by the state, where they have unlimited privileges in asking for service.

Miss Hilton: Our library has done everything except write papers. We do not abstract articles nor do we translate. I was asked at one time if we wrote in our library. But most of the surgeons in the medical school are very highly trained writers. With stenographers writing letters it is more or less mechanical. Assistants in library are especially trained. Doctors or students tell us they must write 1000 page paper—6 months work. Library cooperates. The man who chooses to undertake such a mammoth piece of work will require much service. People who come to us are students or men who have been referred to us by some student. I do not feel that they ask too much. When we receive written request for all literature on a certain subject, we generally write back immediately and see whether the document is going to be printed. Usually have something to go by. We try to find out exactly what is wanted. Sometimes he wants all the references in all languages from the beginning down to the present time. Library cannot prepare full bibliography for him under six months. When explained to him how expensive, it generally boils down to 25. These people have no conception of what happens. Perhaps they want all the literature in English, French or just English and German, or they only want a few articles. They think 25 a great number. Still keeping the sky as the limit, but sort of smoothing them down, giving them the service they need but up to us to decide what they want.

Miss Wilson: American Medical Association library different from university or city library. But speaking from former contact in San Francisco, everybody is seeking service. Good judgment must be the guide in each instance in rendering service.

LIBRARY REFERENCE SERVICE

By

Miss Florence L. Wickes, Reference Librarian

Lane Medical Library, San Francisco

In the matter of service to its patrons, the Lane Medical Library has always had for its unspoken motto: "The sky is the limit." Being typical library workers, trained in ideals of service, we have always accepted our motto with unquestioning enthusiasm. As far as is humanly possible, the staff has always endeavored to give everybody everything they asked for. But now, thrown into an analytic mood by the unfortunate combination of a rapidly growing library and shrinking finances, we are wondering if someone might not say of our library what a man recently said of the R.F.C.: "It is only a question of time until it runs

out of money, but it ought to retain a lot of beautiful friendships."

We are wondering if perhaps there are ways in which we could make a better apportionment of our funds, not just of money, but funds of time and of strength and of nervous energy; all of which have their limits and need conserving; especially in a library with a small staff and a large clientele.

It seems as though it would be more fair to those who have prior claims on our library service, through their connection with the University, and to those doctors outside the University who, by taking out a membership, contribute to the library's support, if we should eliminate some of the service given to those having no just claim to any attention. We have often observed that the doctor who is most generous to the library demands the least service, while those having no real claim on it often make most unreasonable demands. It is to the latter class that we turn our attention, and plan ways to make them realize that a library service that is worth seeking should be supported financially.

The reference librarian turns regretfully from thoughts of a blissful state where the written word may be searched for the truth therein, freely, for all who care to come. She turns mercenary; for library bills must be met, and library budgets decrease; and libraries persist in growing and demanding either an increase in staff or a curtailment of service.

It seems an opportune time to review the library's frozen assets: frozen in that they possess icy souls and never dream of making any return for help lavishly given. They fall into several groups:

There is the doctor who writes that the "Indicus Medicus" is not available in his town, and requests references on two subjects. We regret the nonexistence of the "Indicus Medicus" but feel that a membership fee should have accompanied his request.

Then there is the visitor who descends in person upon the library from out of town, laden down with references saved up for months. He will consume a hundred dollars or so of library time and perhaps depart without saying thank you. We had a glaring example of this one year. About a week before the holidays a doctor came from another university, accompanied by a secretary. He wished to consult tons of books. He refused to even have his secretary help assemble the material, saying that his time was too valuable to have his work held back that way, as we could get the books more quickly. Courtesy to other universities having always been our custom, we decided to give him what he demanded, and the staff neglected their legitimate tasks to supply him with endless material. We were rewarded at the end of the week by his making the suggestion that we should keep the library open on Christmas Day for his convenience.

Then there is the doctor who has by some means established a claim to membership, and who introduces as eligible to take out books in his

name, a friend, the friend's friend, and the friend's friend's friend.

There is also the lawyer, a frequent visitor seeking aid on some medico-legal case, and thinking that he has done quite all that should be expected of him when he tells you that he knows some of the doctors of your medical faculty. The reference librarian is always glad to see him for her own sake, for there is nothing more interesting than a medico-legal case; but while she is poring over his particular problem it sometimes occurs to her that it would be more just to the library that pays for her time if the lawyer would indulge in a modest fee-splitting by the perfectly legitimate means of paying a library membership fee.

An out of town correspondent comes to mind. He writes that three foreign authors, whose names he gives, have somewhere written articles on a certain subject. He would like us to find these articles and abstract them for him, but he does not expect to pay for the work. (He is politely referred to an abstracting service.)

Then there is the correspondent who encloses a list of references, saying that these are all the cases of a certain condition that he has been able to find. He modestly demands that we search the literature to make sure that no other similar case has ever been published. Again, no check for membership fee.

How shall we melt these frozen assets?

For the sake of saving of time it seems as though it might be just as well to exclude the non-medical public. Although the general public may not take books from our library, we have always allowed them to use our books in the library. Considerable study of those who come has made us very skeptical as to whether we are really doing any public service in this way; for these readers fall mainly into four groups: The giggling adolescent, requesting Freud on Dreams: The victim of senility seeking vicarious thrills in a certain type of medical literature: The high-school student, usually supplied by a non-medical teacher with some theme that leads him to investigations that he is too immature to assimilate: And the patient, reading up on his own case and floundering in terms so new and strange to him that he arrives at a wrong conclusion if he arrives at any at all. These all take up time in a day that does not lack incident, as the following excerpts from the day's log may prove:

An Interne: "Brown and I have an argument about the founding of the American Medical Association. Where can I get the stuff to prove that I am right?"

A Dietitian: "Where can I find articles on salt-free diet?"

A Laboratory Technician: "You have a book on microscopy that I would like to have. It is by a man named Mecum. His first name is Vade."

The Telephone: "Is Dr. Jones there? Are you sure he isn't? He said that he was going to the library."

A Lawyer: "I am working on a case where myelitis is claimed to be due to poisoning by nitroglycerine. Can you find anything on the subject?"

The Telephone: "What are your library hours? Aren't you open on Sunday?"

A Reformer: "Will you give me some books on habit-forming drugs?"

A Patient from the Clinics: "I have pains in my legs. Will you give me something to read about it?"

A Medical Student: "Where will I find the Oath of Hippocrates?"

The Telephone: "This is the office of the Daily Scream. If I come out to your library will you give me all the dope on the latest work on rejuvenation?"

A School Teacher: "I wish to give a talk to my students on posture. Where can I find material?"

A Letter from a Librarian: "Dr. Brown will be in San Francisco next week and wishes to check up on those references in his bibliography which are not available in our library. Could you have ready for his use the references on the enclosed list?"

An Interne: "May I use your telephone?" Then to the telephone operator: "This is your favorite interne. I shall be in the library for an hour."

A Medical Student: "Can you tell me where I will find the original article on the Argyll Robertson pupil?"

A School-Girl: "My teacher told me to come here and ask you for a book on the emotions that cause mental hygiene."

A Telephone Call from One of the Faculty: "Will you please ask the History Department to get me out material on Vesalius? I shall be having my class in the library this afternoon."

A Lawyer: "I have a case coming up in which a question is involved of the relation of trauma to goiter. Can you help me with it?"

A Social Service Worker: "I am to give a short talk to a club on fatigue in industry. May I have some material on the subject?"

A Voice on the Telephone: "I have a set of books that I think you would like to have for your history collection. It is the Medical History of the War of the Rebellion."

A Doctor: "Do you recall in what place in Osler's writings he says: 'Know syphilis in all its manifestations and relations and all other things clinical will be added unto you.'"

A Doctor: "I have what seems to be a unique case and I want to write it up. Will you search the literature and see if any case like it has ever been published?"

The Telephone: "I have been ringing that interne's signal several

times and he doesn't answer. I just know he is in the library. Do you see him?"

A Doctor: "I want to find a liver function test by a man named Smith. No, I don't know his first name; but he is Smith of New York."

A Doctor: "Haven't those journals come back from the bindery? I don't see why they always have to be at the bindery when I am writing a paper."

A Letter: "Our hospital is planning to have a small working library for its doctors. Will you give us suggestions as to what books and periodicals you consider most valuable for a small library?"

A Telegram: "Will you verify and complete the following reference and telegraph back?"

A message from the Industrial Accident Commission: "Will you find what you can on Charcot joints and trauma?"

A Visitor: "What is the meaning of the groups of figures in the murals in your reading room? How many books have you in the Library?"

A Voice on the Telephone: "Is the general public allowed to use your library? Have you Havelock Ellis' books?"

A Medical Student: "Will you find me something explaining the variety of forms in which the Caduceus is pictured?"

A Long-Distance Telephone Call: "We have a case of poisoning here and we have no medical library in our town. Will you check up for me on the treatment of acute benzol poisoning and telephone back?"

A Medical Student: "Who wrote that large green book on hernia?"

A Nurse: "Where can I find the Florence Nightingale pledge?"

A School-Boy: "Say! Will you give me something to read about insanity? My teacher didn't say what kind. I guess it's insanity of the brain that I want."

A Doctor: "Will you get together the literature for the last ten years on experimental glaucoma?"

The Librarian (at the close of the day): "There is to be a very interesting medical lecture tonight. Don't you think that we had better go? It keeps one's mind from getting rusty."

DISCUSSION:

Miss Beem: Miss Ophul's problems, as related by Miss Wickes, are precisely those found in all large medical libraries. When we organized our library it was listed as a public medical reference library with regular membership purchasable and also library privileges. Those privileges did not compare with the privileges of general membership. Requests are received for unreasonably large amounts of material. We had to suggest for that kind of thing. We gave him price for membership and for non-membership service. The one making the request could take it or leave it. He usually thinks it best to pay. Telephone inquiries are

handled in the same way. We state restrictions without any apology whatever. In our work they are usually glad to pay for service. If they want material badly enough and are sincere enough in their work, they are glad to pay for service. The plan has been quite successful. We have regular sales talk on membership. Must use your own judgment in complying with requests for service. In connection with visitor from out of town—we considered the place from where he came, the librarians with whom he had come in contact and gave him service accordingly. Courtesy is extended to other libraries. We consider the importance of men's subjects. We had to use our own judgment in doing that. We give all our time and service possible, but staff is limited and sometimes we must show the person how to go about helping himself. They usually appreciate our position and are grateful for all we can do to help them. We go as far as the rules and regulations of our library permit.

Miss Biethan: Met school teacher—asked for material on insomnia. I suggested that she lie flat on her back until she fell asleep, or go to the clinic or to the doctor's office on State Street. She asked about doctor's fee. Two weeks later met her to find she is sleeping soundly and no visit to the doctor because his fee was \$25.00.

W. L.: Most of the doctors bring their references with them. Consider they know what they want. Have difficulty sometimes with faulty references not because they are at fault but as copied from some journal. In such a case we write to them explaining the faulty reference.

Mr. Frankenberger: Requests are received for methods named for physicians, described under various technics and no indication of the name of the author. For instance, some time ago we had a request for the first article on Murphy's button. Simple question to ask, but we had to go through the literature and it simmered down to the point where the original article never mentioned Murphy's button. It took hours to get back to the original source because in the first paper it was not mentioned as Murphy's button but the original reference consisted of a description of the operation on the intestines, an anastomosis, performed by Dr. Murphy. Teachers assign work to students who sometimes become confused. For example—Brown-Sequard, not first and last name, but entire compound last name. Then the inquiry about the rubber man. It develops that this is a skin condition known as cutis hyperplastica. Another inquiry was for an article in "Beitr. z. klin. Chir. Vol. 110, 1911." After considerable research, it was found in "Deut. Ztschr. f. Chir. Vol. 110, 1911." Man comes in requesting considerable amount of material. We get out a few references to get him started. Show him indices and how to get references to additional material. We have to do things within reason, unless we have unlimited funds and staff. Cannot comply with unreasonable requests because there are so many demands made on our staff. We try to show readers how to proceed and endeavor

to help them get properly started. We are quite willing to be of all the aid we can. Sometimes instead of having author's name, they have merely some sentence in the volume. Unable to identify publication they desire. Some requests require mind reader.

INTERLIBRARY LOANS

By

Miss Ella M. Salmonsens

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The main purpose of any library is to collect printed information and have it available for the use of those who need it in their research work. Broadly speaking, books should be loaned to those who have need of them and who for good reasons cannot come to the library.

Books were written and printed to be read, and the more the book is off the library shelves, the more valuable it is. It has no value on the stacks, except perhaps as a literary curiosity for the occasional stack visitor or for the purpose of statistics. For this reason, it is our policy in the John Crerar Library Medical Department to lend books overnight provided there is an ample deposit which is refunded in full, and that the book is returned the following morning or promptly after such time as has been determined upon. This will depend on the Librarian's judgment as regards the amount of use that is generally made of the particular books. Current periodicals are lent overnight ONLY. We have found that this course works well and it has not been abused.

The matter of inter-library loans is quite another thing and is open to discussion. In the case of libraries whose funds are provided totally by the members, it is only fair to them that their books should be available for them at all times and not be lent away a considerable distance for perhaps several days. Furthermore, in the case of a special reference library, such as the John Crerar Library, where the funds have been donated for the specific use of a designated city or group, it is departing from the wishes and object of the Founder to lend books away from the library and have them absent for a week or more to the great disappointment and loss of those who come, perhaps from a distance, to use the library. Besides, the privilege is often abused, and books which could be consulted and returned after one day are kept for a week or more, and the loan is considered as a matter of course, and not as a favor. But I think that you will all agree that the John Crerar Library has always tried to help every one of you here, although we in turn have had several occasions where we wanted to borrow a book and have been flatly refused.

DISCUSSION:

Chairman: Miss Salmonsens has made remarks on library loans. Can we hear briefly from some of the other librarians on inter-library loans that have any considerable amount of such service?